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# Oral History of Retired American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance (AAHPERD) Leaders: Presidents and/or National Award Recipients Interview with Dr. John M. Cooper

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ORAL HISTORY OF RETIRED AMERICAN ALLIANCE  
FOR HEALTH, PHYSICAL EDUCATION, RECREATION AND DANCE  
(AAHPERD) LEADERS: PRESIDENTS AND/OR NATIONAL AWARD RECIPIENTS

INTERVIEW WITH DR. JOHN M. COOPER

APRIL 5, 1988

BY SHARON L. VAN OTEGHEN and ALLYS SWANSON

TRANSCRIBER - SHARON L. VAN OTEGHEN

ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH OFFICE  
MEMPHIS STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH OFFICE  
THE COLLEGE OF ST. CATHERINE

AAHPERD ARCHIVES

ORAL HISTORY OF RETIRED AMERICAN ALLIANCE  
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Dr. John M. Cooper served as President of the American Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance (AAHPER), now the American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance (AAHPERD) from 1969 to 1970.

Dr. Cooper received an AAHPERD Honor Award in 1955.

AAHPERD ARCHIVES

MEMPHIS STATE UNIVERSITY  
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COLLEGE OF ST. CATHERINE  
PHYSICAL EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

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PLACE

Kansas City, MO.

DATE

April 5, 1988

(to be completed at the time  
and place of the interview)

John M. Cooper  
(INTERVIEWEE)

4/ 5/ 88  
(DATE)

(For the AAHPERD Archives, the Mississippi Valley Archives of the John Willard Brister Library of Memphis State University and the Physical Education Department of St. Catherine's College)

THIS PROJECT IS AN ORAL HISTORY OF AMERICAN ALLIANCE FOR HEALTH, PHYSICAL EDUCATION, RECREATION AND DANCE RETIRED LEADERS: AAHPERD PRESIDENTS AND NATIONAL AWARD RECIPIENTS. THIS INTERVIEW IS WITH DR. JOHN M. COOPER ON APRIL 5, 1988, IN KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI, AT THE AAHPERD NATIONAL CONVENTION. INTERVIEWERS ARE SHARON L. VAN OTEGHEN, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION AT MEMPHIS STATE UNIVERSITY AND ALLYS SWANSON ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION AT THE COLLEGE OF ST. CATHERINE, ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA.

MRS. SWANSON: John, we'd like to begin this interview this afternoon by asking you to relate your early family life, elementary and secondary education and influences you recall that led you to select a career in physical education.

DR. COOPER: I'll certainly do my best to try to answer some of those questions. I was born in the state of Kentucky in the little village of Smith Mills. Actually I was born on a farm out in the country where my father was the overseer of a large farm. Then we moved from there to Corydon, Kentucky, where my father was in the business of buying, feeding and selling cattle. After pasturing the cattle, he was responsible for moving them to the market. My mother was a school teacher for a brief period of time. She had six children and I'm the oldest of the six. All six have attained some degree of recognized accomplishment. There are three girls and three boys who now have 19 offsprings. My mother spent most of her time raising her children. Later my father became director of the stockyards in Hopkinsville, Kentucky. He then owned a packing plant there. My family moved to



Hopkinsville when I was a senior in high school.

My dad was a big man who was left handed and very good in sports or in anything he took up. I suppose he had some influence on me in that respect, although he was gone a great deal of the time. So his influence might not have been as strong as he may have wanted it to be. Being the oldest, it was my responsibility to watch over all of the other kids while he was gone, which I tried to do. I was very much interested in sports at an early age and built my own outdoor and indoor basketball court.

My father turned a smokehouse over to me. I put barrel hoops at either end and thereby had an indoor court when it was too cold to be outdoors. Then I had my own outdoor court while in high school. The high school used oil that was put over the outdoor court to keep it from being dusty. I carried the leftover oil to my house and oiled my court too!

DR. VAN OTEGHEN: What was the surface of your court?

DR. COOPER: The surface was dirt. So I played basketball from the time I was a youngster as you can see. My mother had one rule that was a good rule, though I didn't like it at the time. Her rule was that I had to read for an hour a day. I was a small boy at that time, and after I read for an hour, I could play all I wanted to. I was to read to enlighten myself, so I read Tom Swift, Zane Grey's books and various kinds of adventure books that I liked. It was a good thing as my mother was very interested in education. As a consequence she wanted all of her children to go to school, and all six of them went off to college. It was expensive but not as expensive as today.

We grew up during the depression. I started college in 1930 under this depressed financial setup. I didn't have any money, and my parents didn't have

much money. But we divided our money up and gave the three girls the first share, and the boys were to scramble it up in some way. We borrowed it if we could, and that's how we had enough to go through college.

MRS. SWANSON: When were you born?

DR. COOPER: I was born in 1912 and will be 78 on my next birthday.

MRS. SWANSON: Your undergraduate work was done in Missouri?

DR. COOPER: Yes, at the University of Missouri. All of the children in my family went there except for one of my sisters who went to Christian College, now called Columbia College, in Columbia, Missouri. Let me relate something that influenced my scientific bent. My folks moved to Hopkinsville, Kentucky, my senior year, and the schools there had what were called county exams in certain fields. I represented the school in physics. I was able to take chemistry and physics in Hopkinsville whereas those subjects weren't offered in the smaller school I attended in Corydon, Kentucky. That gave me a push toward the more scientific areas of learning. Also my father was an inventor, and that influenced me. You know the swinging gates you can walk up to, pull a chain, and the gate opens?

MRS. SWANSON: Oh, yes.

DR. COOPER: He invented one of those. I want to comment on a humorous incident concerning my school days. In high school I was the youngest player on the basketball team. All of the others were three or four years older, and the boys who were the best were not smokers and drinkers. Some of the others did those things, I'm sure. They sort of protected me like Isaiah Thomas' brothers protected him. You know that story. Isaiah Thomas was a star professional basketball player for the Detroit



Pistons. We went over to play a team at a neighboring school that was "tougher than a boot." It was a coal mining town. On the way over they said, "John, you're going to have to watch this team; the players are mean and rough, and the people in the stands are mean and rough." It turned out to be a pretty rough game. Our center was thrown out for fighting; both of our guards were thrown out for fighting along with their representatives, and I was left as the most experienced player. They told me later that I didn't pay any attention to the fights, and I'm not sure if this is true, but they said that I scored all the points, because the others had all been thrown out of the game.

MRS. SWANSON: Were you the tallest?

DR. COOPER: No, I wasn't really tall, but I was more intent on the game, and the others on either team were more intent on fighting. I just dodged them, because I was smaller than the others.

I'll comment on one other humorous incident. My mother raised a lot of chickens, and we had many roosters that would fight to be the cock of the flock, and some of the roosters had white feathers. One of my brothers and I would run the rooster that was cock of the the flock through a stove pipe, and he turned black for awhile. Then the roosters would fight all over again to achieve "cock of the flock," because they didn't recognize him.

MRS. SWANSON: Relate your undergraduate work at the University of Missouri.

DR. COOPER: I was a history and economics major and took a lot of geology as well. I'm a rock collector, and I have a lot of geodes and shells from all over the world. My interest in rock collecting was probably stimulated by my having taken courses in geology. While in college



some of the members of the basketball team suggested that I take a few physical education courses. I took eleven hours. Everything else I took was in other fields.

MRS. SWANSON: Your college majors then were history and economics. Did you play on a basketball team?

DR. COOPER: Yes, I played on the basketball team and was also student manager of the bookstore my senior year. I didn't have a scholarship, because this was before the days of scholarships. I went to work for the Magnolia Oil Company right out of college. When I saw what I'd have to do - this was before computers, of course - I knew I'd have to sit all day at a desk, and I told myself I didn't want to do that.

MRS. SWANSON: Was being on the basketball team a significant experience for you?

DR. COOPER: Yes. In fact I was the co-leader in scoring in the Big Eight Conference. After my sophomore year in college I worked here in Kansas City during the summer under a situation that wasn't good. This was the Brush Creek Project. Pendergast was the boss and Harry Truman was the ward leader. A man by the name of Harry Tidd was a lawyer and a former quarter miler. I was a quarter miler in college. He went down to the University of Missouri and told them that he had a good job for some student athlete in the summer. So I was sent up to Kansas City. It was really for the poor families; it wasn't for a male college student. It took me a long time to figure out all of the implications, and it kind of turned me off on politics after being involved in that project.

My junior year I ran in the World's Fair track meet in Chicago in 1933, and

when I finished running and seeing the fair, I went home and didn't have a job. So I went around and talked to some of the professors and people there at the University of Missouri, and I formed the Cooper Camp. I had 16 youngsters to whom I taught swimming twice a week. On the other days we played sports and then went on a hike each Friday. I liked the kids and they seemed to like me, so I got started in physical education that way.

DR. VAN OTEGHEN: Did your camp require funding?

DR. COOPER: No, I didn't need any funding. The athletic director was a friend, and I asked him if I could use some of the facilities that weren't in use including the outdoor swimming pool. He said, "Sure, as long as it doesn't interfere." So I took the 16 kids and went on about my business.

MRS. SWANSON: I assume the campers paid a fee.

DR. COOPER: Yes, they paid \$10.00.

MRS. SWANSON: Ten dollars for the entire program?

DR. COOPER: No, \$10.00 per month which was quite a little bit then. I think I earned \$160.00 a month, which was quite a lot then.

DR. VAN OTEGHEN: You were paid these fees as Director of the camp. How many months did the camp last?

DR. COOPER: I think the total for each one was six weeks if I remember correctly. I've got a picture of this at home. Certain of the college kids came and helped me at times. They would go with me on hikes with the kids. One of those boys wrote to me not very long ago. One day we went swimming in the creek - Hinkson Creek- the whole group went swimming. The student helper and I were counting the youngsters, and we found that we



were one short. There he was, underneath the water, just lying there. We pulled him out, and we didn't know much about artificial respiration, but we went to work and pumped the water out of him, and he revived. His mother, who was a nurse, came to see me, and "Oh, boy!" I told her what had happened, and she seemed to be satisfied but had a physician examine him. Another time during one of the hikes, one little kid ran head on into a barbed wire fence and raked both arms. He was a bloody mess. I told his parents I had tried and tried and tried to keep him from running into anything. They said, "We know, he's head strong!" So I got by that time. Luck was on my side!

DR. VAN OTEGHEN: You said earlier that you worked for the Magnolia Oil Company but that it was too sedentary a job for you.

DR. COOPER: I left that company after about three months. They called me time and again, but I told them I didn't want to spend my time sitting behind a desk, so that's what happened there.

Then the little town of Centralia, Missouri, which is east of Kansas City, hired me as the basketball coach and history teacher. One year I taught both the girls and boys, because the lady who was supposed to teach the girls was in a car wreck, so I taught physical education for both the girls and boys and the history classes too. The state inspector came around from the State Department and went down the list of teachers to see what schooling and degrees the teachers had. He came to my name and said, "Well, I wondered where he went!" Then he went right on. At that time I didn't have a credential to teach physical education. All I had was 11 hours of physical education and a few hours in education. I decided I had better go back to school and get the qualifications to teach physical education, which I did.



After two years at Centralia High School, I went back to the University of Missouri and got my master's degree. I was allowed to take education courses as a part of that degree. I went from there to Chillicothe, Missouri, as the football coach, basketball coach and track coach. A lady there coached the girls' teams. I was there for only one year and then Webster Groves, a suburb of St. Louis, Missouri, hired me. At that time Webster Groves was the elite high school in the state of Missouri. There I met my wife, Charlianna, who was a Webster Groves, Missouri teacher. We were married August 30, 1940. We have three children, all of whom are professional people, and we have four grandchildren. I taught there two years and then the University of Missouri hired me back on its staff. In the meantime I had been going to Columbia University which at that time was an elite place for physical educators to go to school. I took approximately 25 hours of course work at Columbia University.

When I went to the University of Missouri as an instructor, they said I could work on my doctorate. They accepted the 25 hours I got at Columbia University, because some of the professors on the faculty at Columbia University had been teaching regularly at the University of Missouri in the summer. Up to the time of World War II I worked on the doctorate. I completed everything except the dissertation.

DR. VAN OTEGHEN: Did World War II affect you and/or your career in any way?

DR. COOPER: Personally my family was disrupted to an extent since I was sent to several places from Lincoln, Nebraska, army air base to Western States Regional air forces training center headquarters in Denver and finally to National army air training forces headquarters in Fort

Worth, Texas, where all decisions on training for the army air forces (pilot, ground crew etc.) were made. My job was to write the physical training programs on all kinds of training groups. This was good training for me. Also I visited many camps and even hospitals to determine if regulations were being followed. This was good experience since at Denver I helped develop a landing training device that was used by the pilots in training for development of landing skills after ejection from a plane.

Career-wise, to a degree, the experience in the army air forces helped enhance my skills in writing, speaking and dealing with people. There were many jobs open when I resigned from army air forces after World War II was over. Yet I had lost 40 months of development in my field which retarded my advancement. However, many people were "in the same boat." Young people with doctorates were scarce.

After the war I came back to the University of Missouri in the summer, and the State Department hired me to write a curriculum study. So I had a good break and got paid to write my dissertation. I had wanted to write it on kinesiology, because after the War the University of Southern California had hired me, and that's what they wanted me to do. I was told it was much easier for me to do it on curriculum and get paid for it. Actually the University of Southern California contacted me just before the end of World War II, and I accepted their offer. I might not have had that opportunity if there had been no war. At USC I worked in the fields of kinesiology and biomechanics and taught some graduate courses. I also taught some basketball and track and field courses.

A man by the name of L.E. Morehouse was at USC in the area of exercise



physiology, and he always called me "Johnco." He said, "Johnco, why don't we write a kinesiology book?" So we did in 1950. On the side I coached the city of Los Angeles' AAU (Amateur Athletic Union) representative in basketball. I forgot to mention that the second year I was at the University of Missouri - just before the War, I was the freshman coach and assistant coach in basketball. Those experiences are the bases of some of the books I now have. In working with Morehouse, who was also trained in kinesiology, we exchanged ideas. He was a night person, and I was a day person. I coached the AAU basketball team from 6:00 to 7:00 p.m. and would then run out to his house and work on a kinesiology book with him until about 10:00 p.m. By that time I was "shot" and he was just waking up. He'd take over for another hour, and I'd stagger home. We worked like that in order to complete the book and get it published. It took two years of concentrated effort.

I moved from assistant professor to full professor at the University of Southern California where I established a biomechanics lab. Then Indiana University wanted to know if I would come and establish a biomechanics laboratory there. That's why I went to Indiana University in 1966. I went to USC in 1945 and spent 21 years there prior to going to Indiana. While in California I got into community work. I was president of the school board, the hospital board, and I was on a state school board committee that met with the governor. I had many good experiences of that sort. I was also moderator of my church.

MRS. SWANSON: Your many professional leadership experiences also included work with the professional associations.

DR. COOPER: Yes, I was president of the Southwest District for Health,



Physical Education and Recreation and later president of the California Association for Health, Physical Education and Recreation. I was Southwest District Representative to the AAHPER board at one point and was later elected president of the American Association for Health, Physical Education and Recreation. Now "D" for Dance has been added.

DR. VAN OTEGHEN: As I recall you were president of AAHPER when I was a doctoral student at Indiana University.

DR. COOPER: Yes, it was quite soon after I took the position at Indiana University.

DR. VAN OTEGHEN: You mentioned in the questionnaire several individuals who influenced you and/or your career. Please comment on the individuals I name. Jessie Feiring Williams.

DR. COOPER: Jessie Feiring Williams was the chairman of the department at Columbia University. He was a medical doctor as were many of the early directors of physical education. Some were called physical trainers. He was interested in the scientific aspects of the field, and I talked to him a lot. He influenced me in becoming more interested in scientific areas.

DR. VAN OTEGHEN: What was Jessie Feiring Williams like as a person?

DR. COOPER: He was a debator in college and as a consequence had an easy flow of words when he communicated with others. He was dramatic in his speaking and wasn't very tolerant of some people. When a fellow challenged him in class one day, he moved him to the front row and told him he would sit there and not say a word. He was a little different, but disregarding that, he had a good mind.

DR. VAN OTEGHEN: How did Ruth Glassow influence you?

DR. COOPER: Ruth came out to Southern California on a sabbatical and she and I went through some of the films I had. I had an xray film of motion in which she was quite interested. Morehouse had in the meantime gone to UCLA (University of California at Los Angeles). He was then doing straight exercise physiology, and suggested that I get another author for the kinesiology book. I called Ruth and she said she thought she would be interested, so we planned for a meeting in Denver, Colorado. She said she wanted to test me to see if I "knew anything." She was very blunt. I said, "Ok, go ahead and test me." She was better than I in several things, but I was better than she in application to sports, which she acknowledged. As a consequence we decided we would write a revision of the earlier kinesiology book that Morehouse and I had written. Ruth and I had about four or five editions, and just recently Marlene Adrian has written with me. We've just completed a second revision of that kinesiology book with her as co-author.

DR. VAN OTEGHEN: I remember that Ralph LaPorte dealt with the area of curriculum. You mentioned him as an individual who influenced you.

DR. COOPER: Ralph was a very versatile person who was interested in art. His father was an architect, and Ralph worked in his office. He encouraged me to go into the scientific areas, and he was my first real boss. He was at the University of Southern California for 42 years. He was an artist himself - (not that I was a painting artist) - and he was a very, very nice person in addition to being a top person in the profession.

DR. VAN OTEGHEN: What were your contacts with E.C. Davis in California?



DR. COOPER: Yes, E.C. Davis was a real scholar, and he had held some pretty big positions. He was at Penn State; he was head of one of the big programs at the University of Louisville and later came to USC (University of Southern California). He was a very diligent scholar. I was the young one, and most of the other faculty were older - Eleanor Metheny and many others who were outstanding leaders and writers, and I had to either "shape up or ship out." You had to work there.

DR. VAN OTEGHEN: Did Eleanor Metheny influence you in any special way?

DR. COOPER: Eleanor was a mathematician, and she helped in giving me direction in the mathematics of movement.

MRS. SWANSON: John, we'd like to hear about some of your career accomplishments.

DR. COOPER: At the University of Southern California the biomechanics laboratory was just in its beginning, and the athletic coaches were all interested in it. I invented two or three pieces of equipment that we could use and became known throughout the city. I could go to a fellow who had equipment or who had the know how for building it. He'd tell me what to do if I didn't have the know-how. I also haunted all the pawn shops to get pieces of equipment. To this day some of those coaches write to me from California, because of that early start.

One of the first televised basketball games was when I was coaching an AAU (Amateur Athletic Union) team in Los Angeles. The announcer, Welsh, was the individual who narrates the RoseBowl parade. I had a mixture of different experiences.

DR. VAN OTEGHEN: Did you have any special challenges during your years at



Indiana University? You, of course, worked with the graduate program.

DR. COOPER: When I initially went there, there was no biomechanics laboratory nor any facility for it. It was a challenge to meet with some of the people there and tell them of what value kinesiology and biomechanics were. The Dean of the Graduate School was a renowned chemist. However, he listened while I explained how we used film to determine speed and angles of movement. The use of the force plate gave us force measurements. He later told some faculty members from a variety of disciplines that any subject can be researched if the tools and procedures are valid and reliable. It was also a challenge to get the top students to come to Indiana University. It was an additional challenge to meet with the Dean of the Graduate School and tell him what we were trying to do. Also Art Daniels had been the Dean of the School of Health, Physical Education and Recreation at Indiana University, and he died before I arrived. I called Indiana University and told them that he was the one who influenced me in coming and now he wasn't going to be there. John Endwright, who was then the acting Dean said, "Oh, don't decide not to come, because now we need you more than ever." So I decided to make the move.

DR. VAN OTEGHEN: Have you played a part in training students who are leaders in the field of physical education today?

DR. COOPER: There are some 50 or more individuals who were my students who have positions in kinesiology, and many of the administrators in physical education are graduates of Indiana University. I have had continuous contact with many former students over the years. I probably have had direct relationship with over 500 present day physical

educators.

DR. VAN OTEGHEN: Share with us your teaching philosophy and any changes you might have made in your philosophy over the years.

DR. COOPER: I've always tended to be a defender of the "underdog" a little bit. That influenced me in trying to get the best out of somebody who wasn't showing his/her best. You can always motivate a real good conscientious student, but it's not as easy to challenge the student who has the potential but isn't using it. I think that's part of a professor's responsibility - that and to spend time with students which is something a lot of professors don't do. Sometimes I tried to spend more time with students than I really had.

I also tried to keep up with the students when they got out on the job. If they made mistakes, I tried to help them correct those mistakes, or if they were seeking a new job, I would try to help them get a new job. A lot of people, however, don't agree with that philosophy. They think once a student gets a degree, they've given them all they can. Then it's up to them to find their own positions. I don't subscribe to that philosophy.

DR. VAN OTEGHEN: How thankful the people are for whom you've taken the extra time and helped along the way. You indicated that you are interested in the scientific aspects of physical education. How have those interests influenced your career?

DR. COOPER: Even with the game of basketball, for example, I didn't think we knew enough about the science of the game of basketball. Many things were unanswered. I had a background in that sport and some training in the sciences, so I believed I could put the two together. I



tried to unite the two aspects. For many years physical educators were teachers of skills and not teachers of the science of a sport.

I have another philosophical point I'd like to make. If you want to be a good teacher of physical education, you have to have had some experience in a sport. Some people don't agree with that, but I believe you've got to know the problems that are associated with participation in a sport or an activity.

MRS. SWANSON: John, what gift or gifts do you hope that you've given your students and those with whom you've worked over the years?

DR. COOPER: That's a difficult thing to answer. I would say "to see yourself as others see you." Remember Robert Burns' comment about that? I think I have patience and go that extra mile. I try to be as well informed as possible, to accept criticism and to accept suggestions. Usually I look upon a graduate student as a part of the staff such that I have a mutual exchange of ideas with that person. With those who worked with me in the lab, we developed a budget together, not separately, and we decided on equipment the same way.

DR. VAN OTEGHEN: As an example, I remember when you changed my life for three and a half years when you called and offered me an NDEA fellowship for doctoral work at Indiana University. I remember that you said I would have to decide within two hours whether or not I would accept it.

DR. COOPER: We tried to find the best students we could based on their credentials which were shown primarily on paper. Many of our students who are now out in the field have done well, and I feel proud of that fact.



DR. VAN OTEGHEN: Basketball was one of your favorite sports, having played in the AAU for many years. We understand that you're now conducting basketball clinics on how the game was played 50 or more years ago. Tell us how you structure those presentations and the kinds of things that you demonstrate.

DR. COOPER: First I have to be invited to give the demonstration. I did the first one at Indiana University. I chose the period of the early thirties and explained and demonstrated how dribbling, passing, shooting and guarding were done at that time. I've retained most of my basketball skills though no one pushes me when I demonstrate. When I shoot and am fortunate enough to hit the basket, the audience gives me a big cheer, but if I miss too many times, they don't cheer. I'm not a drinker or smoker and keep in pretty good shape, so approximately two weeks before I put on a demonstration, I warm up and practice shooting and passing for about 15 minutes each day. I have a list of the things I plan to explain and demonstrate. Sometimes I respond to questions from the floor. If I have time I may go into the mechanics of a skill. Sometimes this presentation is done at half-time such as for a basketball game at the University of Missouri in Columbia. At Cortland, New York, I had about an hour, so I talked about the history of basketball too. I have also published a book called, Performance Movements of Basketball Players. In that book I trace the history of basketball - how guarding was done etc. - I show some of that if I'm given time to do so.

DR. VAN OTEGHEN: Who do you involve with you in the demonstration? Do you get student volunteers from the university where the demonstration is taking place?

DR. COOPER: No, the students don't shoot as I would shoot. They're all one-handed shooters. I'm supposed to have been the first player to have ever shot a jump shot. That's kind of hard to prove, because there was no television, but when I played during my college days, we played against teams from the east, west and south, and no one shot a jump shot at that time.

I do get someone to work with me in certain instances. I may ask a student to pass the ball to me, to guard me, or I guard him. I seldom use varsity players but I have. I did do a demonstration once with varsity players, and I went to Taiwan and did a demonstration with their national basketball team. What they had to say was interesting. They said the reason I could pass so well was because I had such strong arms. I hadn't noticed that my arms were especially strong, but I automatically looked down my arms to see if I had "Pop-eye" arms. The Taiwan players simply couldn't snap the ball well in passing.

DR. VAN OTEGHEN: When you give your demonstrations do you dress in the uniform of the time period you're representing?

DR. COOPER: Usually they give me one of the present team uniforms. At Indiana I put on the red uniform and later I took a seat up in the stands. When I went up there they gave me a big cheer, because I had hit some of the baskets. If I hadn't hit the baskets that wouldn't have been the case.

MRS. SWANSON: The basketball activities are very physical and very interesting. What other activities fill your retirement days, John?



DR. COOPER: I play golf when I can, but it's a time consuming sport. I try to walk rapidly at least two miles everyday. I walk up stairs and try to avoid elevators when possible. I keep active by doing a lot of gardening also.

MRS. SWANSON: In addition to the physical activities that you've mentioned you're enjoying during retirement, what kinds of things occupy the time you formerly spent going to the office, the lab, writing and doing research?

DR. COOPER: Indiana University continues to give me an office, telephone and access to a secretary. I go in two to three times a week. I still get a lot of correspondence, so I respond to that while I'm at the office. I'm still writing books, make some speeches, and I belong to the International Society of Biomechanics for Sport. I'm on their board and am going to present a paper in Montana at their annual meeting. I just keep on going and am about as busy as I ever was. Other people say, "that's it," and do something else once they retire. I haven't as yet gone that direction. I've also served as president of the local Kiwanis Club. They do a lot of things for the young people of the community, and I get involved with that. I am still active in some faculty all university activities. I am a former president of the faculty club of Indiana University. At USC I was secretary of the academic senate.

DR. VAN OTEGHEN: Is there any advice that you might give to young people today that might make a difference in their lives should they heed your advice?

DR. COOPER: It's pretty hard to get people to "heed your advice." I'm a



little bit on the side of being an example rather than telling someone what to do. They need to understand, however, that you don't get something for nothing. You have to be dedicated, and you have to have good work habits. If you don't have those, you can be ever so smart and be at the bottom of the group.

DR. VAN OTEGHEN: Do you have any suggestions for those nearing retirement as they make plans for their retirement years?

DR. COOPER: It's difficult to set down any requirements, because of the nature and health state of people. I have a friend who is a doctor who wants to do just what I have done. He wants to gradually reduce his load but still work. Most studies show that those who continue working are those who live the longest and who also enjoy life more. There are a lot of people who are bitter because they were told they had to retire. You've probably run into some of them. They're told that as of a certain age such as 65, they can no longer work at a university or factory or some other place. They need to have something to do, and it's best to do something you've already done, - that you know something about. That's the advice I would give to people who are preparing for retirement.

You can change your complete orientation toward things or you can change your occupation. If you've always wanted, for example, to be a baker - but you've taught in a university - then go ahead and do that once you retire from teaching. But you need to be occupied, or you'll just waste away.

DR. VAN OTEGHEN: In other words, you recommend that a person face each day with a purpose.

DR. COOPER: Yes.

DR. VAN OTEGHEN: Have you done anything special with respect to nutrition and/or stress management?

DR. COOPER: I think that some of the people at Indiana believe that I let problems "roll off my back". I'm not sure; I just don't know about that. I try not to let stressful situations bother me more than one day, but that's not always possible. I do try not to let myself worry about things for more than a day. If I've done the best I could, then that's all I could do. I do pay attention to nutrition. I believe that cholesterol needs to be reduced and that people should have stress tests every so often. I've done that. Your lifestyle dictates your health to some extent. I eat a lot of high fiber and low cholesterol foods. If I indulge in banquet food for awhile, I gain weight. I don't really care for sweets, so that helps.

MRS. SWANSON: I was interested in your response to the stress question. What tips can you give administrators for handling stress in their administrative roles?

DR. COOPER: The personality of that person is involved. If one is volatile and gets angry quickly that's a problem. If you just sit back and think a minute and take your time to respond, you'll probably have less stress than if you explode. There are those who believe, on the other hand, that if you explode, you've got it "off your chest". I'd recommend that we should take things in stride. That's the way I see it.

DR. VAN OTEGHEN: John, you indicated that you invented the jump shot in basketball. Would you relate how that occurred?

DR. COOPER: It's not easy to talk about yourself, but I'll try to explain it. In high school when I was playing basketball I was the



youngest member of the team. The other boys were three or four years older and consequently taller and bigger. When someone threw the ball to me, the only way I could get off a shot was to shoot before I came down to the floor. That gradually worked in to where I could catch the ball while on the floor and then jump and shoot. I kept shooting that way until I couldn't shoot any other way.

DR. VAN OTEGHEN: Did the coach approve of your technique?

DR. COOPER: Well, in high school the coach didn't say much of anything, but when I went to college the coach asked me where I had learned that shot. When I started to tell him, he said, "At this university we shoot with both feet on the floor. Do you understand?" Of course I said, "Yes, sir." When we were playing at Ohio State in college, I was a sophomore. Freshmen didn't play on the varsity team then. Someone threw the ball to me, and I jumped up to catch it. I got ready to throw it to someone and couldn't find anyone, so I just threw it at the basket and it went in. Most coaches are realistic and are pragmatists. My coach never said anything more to me, and from then on he tried to get other players on the team to shoot the same way, especially the center.

DR. VAN OTEGHEN: So, from then on the jump shot was in! During the years you served as President of the American Association for Health, Physical Education and Recreation, 1969-70, did you initiate or work with any special projects?

DR. COOPER: Yes, several. Naturally you inherit some of them and some you develop as a part of a group. It was a time when we were deciding about Reston, Virginia, as headquarters for the Association.



There were people in the profession who would have liked to have seen us move the headquarters to a central location in the United States such as Kansas City. Naturally there were pros and cons, but finally the group decided on Reston. Those who wanted to move the headquarters to the midwest had a number of good reasons: the headquarters would be closer to all of the members, the cost of rent would be cheaper, the salaries of employees would be less and travel would be less expensive. Those opposed, which included the headquarters staff, proposed the following: the staff would be too new since practically no one wanted to move, the proximity to the seat of government was necessary, the cost of moving would be horrendous when it was investigated (this probably was the deciding factor against moving) and being too far away from other national education associations that were beginning to locate at Reston.

Another big project was a complete evaluation of our entire Association. We hired a consulting firm which gave us the evaluation. We also had to evaluate some of the members of our working staff, and this was time consuming and emotional at times. There was also at times a bit of a split between the secondary people in the Association and the college people, and the situation had to be mended such that the groups were brought together in harmony. Creation of associations within the Alliance such as NASPE (National Association for Sport and Physical Education) helped alleviate some of this feeling whereby the secondary people had a greater role.

DR. VAN OTEGHEN: How did the American Association for Health, Physical Education and Recreation come out on the evaluation?

DR. COOPER: The evaluation wasn't actually to rate the Association, but

rather to suggest ways to make it better. Many of the suggestions were adopted which included duties and responsibilities of each employee, pension provisions, percent of reserve funds to help in securing underwriters and sponsors etc.

DR. VAN OTEGHEN: Are you referring to the move of the Association to become the Alliance?

DR. COOPER: Yes, that too was a big concern when I was president. The people in health wanted their own association; the people in recreation wanted their own association, and the question became, how could you keep them all together and still give them some autonomy. That was one of the problems we solved by creating associations within the Alliance.

DR. VAN OTEGHEN: With respect to the concern for participation in the Association of the secondary school members vs. college and university members, is it considered essential to have a president of the Alliance as it is called presently, come from the public school setting?

DR. COOPER: Some people would say, yes, and there is some effort occasionally to bring some balance. As you know there is alternate selection of a man and a woman as president of the Alliance. The selection of a public school person as president is good, if that person is effective, just as the same is true of college or university people. I think you'll find that higher education people are better known and, therefore, often have a better chance of getting elected. This isn't always true, because there are some public school persons who have emerged as president and have been great leaders.



DR. VAN OTEGHEN: During your career what were your greatest challenges?

DR. COOPER: With every line of endeavor there are times when you are severely challenged. If this weren't so, you would become very complacent and wouldn't succeed and develop all of your potentials.

Keeping up with the field of physical education is one of the greatest challenges, and being able to investigate and attempt with help to solve the problems that confront the profession is a continuous challenge. Being able to be considered one of the leaders of the profession is a challenge. Are you that good - you ask yourself. Then you go back to the drawing board and analyze where your strengths and weaknesses lie. That's not easy, because you can't see yourself as others see you, but you do know you have both weaknesses and strengths. You should exploit your strengths and shore up your weaknesses.

DR. VAN OTEGHEN: Did you find it an easy task to work with both men and women? At many institutions the department for men and the department for women didn't come together for many years.

DR. COOPER: If you consider a person a professional and what that individual can contribute regardless of his or her sex, there isn't a problem. It's when you begin to think, "She's thinking like a woman or he's thinking like a man that you begin to have problems." I think I was fortunate in that at the University of Southern California, for example, the women and the men were equally strong leaders. If the men are not strong leaders and the women are strong leaders - or the reverse - then there are problems. We must accept the opinions of both men and women as people, not as members of a particular sex.

DR. VAN OTEGHEN: Where do you feel that strengths lie with respect to men vs.



women?

DR. COOPER: The answer to that question becomes individualistic in a way. Women are often better organized than are the men, but men are sometimes more realistic and practical. On the other hand, you'll find many idealistic men and many women who are both realistic and pragmatic. It's an individual thing, but as a group women are more organized and idealistic and men are considered by some as more practical. You can't apply that to every person, however.

DR. VAN OTEGHEN: Were there any disappointments in your career?

DR. COOPER: Sure, out of diversity often comes success. Harry Truman is a good example of a man who was a failure of almost everything until he became President of the United States. He knew his weaknesses. I tried to get some jobs that I didn't get, and I got some jobs that I didn't expect. Also, I tended to be very sympathetic, but that isn't always a good trait to have. There were disappointments, sure, but you can't let disappointments keep you from doing what you want to do.

DR. VAN OTEGHEN: You've written and had published several books in the areas of biomechanics, kinesiology, track and field and basketball. Many people find it difficult to write and achieve publication of articles and books. How did you discipline yourself to write?

DR. COOPER: I believe that writing comes easy to only a few. For most people it is a hard, difficult task. One of my friends said, "Let's just get one word after another. Let's not talk about writing, let's just write." You can always refine once you have words down. I have one friend who can write one time and that's it. That's so unusual that he is the

only friend I have who can do it that way. You simply have to designate a time to write and do so. If you don't set aside the time and sit down at a desk or table and start writing, you'll never accomplish it. It doesn't sound so good sometimes, so you work on it. After 50 years of writing it's easier now, but it's still difficult for me to write. It's not an easy task, but I do it with some degree of ease after each day of trying. I can write letters easily. Someone told me that my letters are the best thing I write as well as short statements. Writing is a difficult task, and you just have to say you're going to do it.

DR. VAN OTEGHEN: In that writing is easier for some people than others, do you believe that it's fair for promotion and tenure possibilities to be based so largely today on one's ability to write and publish?

DR. COOPER: Service, teaching and research are the three components of a good, successful career in the university world. Not everyone can do real good research, not everybody can be a good teacher, and not everybody can render service. However, since the three are components that apply to promotion and tenure and everyone knows it, then if you can't meet the requirements, you shouldn't be in that field. However, occasionally there is an outstanding teacher that everyone recognizes who isn't required to do research or a lot of service in order to achieve promotion. On the other hand, there are outstanding researchers who are either poor teachers or who seldom do any teaching. Again their research activities are so outstanding that they're promoted. If one isn't outstanding in one of these three areas, he had better get all three areas shored up or seek employment in another field.

DR. VAN OTEGHEN: Do you believe that some individuals would find greatest



success teaching at a level other than the university level?

DR. COOPER: Possibly, but there are still achievement requirements for every position.

DR. VAN OTEGHEN: You're a member of the American Academy of Physical Education. How did you feel when you were elected to the Academy?

DR. COOPER: Some of the excitement is taken care of early when you are proposed for the Academy, although for many years, that was kept a secret and people usually didn't know when they were being considered. After my name was proposed I thought maybe I could make it. At the time my name was proposed there weren't very many people doing work in kinesiology, so that made it a little easier. Now the term biomechanics is used. I felt it was a great honor, and I just accepted it and went on about my work.

DR. VAN OTEGHEN: I didn't know a person was proposed for membership in the Academy. I thought an individual was simply elected in a particular year to that body. Does the Academy send out a list of individuals being proposed to their present membership?

DR. COOPER: Yes, your name is proposed by someone who is a member of the Academy. After your name is proposed you're voted on by a committee and then a list of those they think should be accepted for membership is sent to the total membership of the Academy who then vote on those individuals. No one ever tells how they voted, but sometimes, as I mentioned, you know that your name has been submitted and that you're up for election.



DR. VAN OTEGHEN: What do you see as the purpose of the Academy for the overall profession?

DR. COOPER: The Academy has, in a way, been trying to decide that. It is supposedly composed of the outstanding members of the profession - the thinkers, - the investigators. They are people who are on the frontier of knowledge. They should take stands on issues and be a sounding board. They do do that sometimes. The problem is that their points of view, while published, aren't always read, listened to or adhered to by the total membership, and many times their ideas aren't ever known. That makes it difficult for their ideas to be conveyed to the total profession. But they do represent the frontier of knowledge, and that's the way I think it should be.

DR. VAN OTEGHEN: Are the ideas or the results of Academy research ever specifically made known to the Alliance president or to the AAHPERD Executive Board?

DR. COOPER: No, I don't think it's done that way. It's published under the Academy Papers, and if you're one of those eager persons who seeks new information, then you read the Academy Papers. If you're not seeking information from that source, then you don't read them.

DR. VAN OTEGHEN: Among the various awards you received, one was called the Sports and Physical Education Inspiration Award. You received that award in 1983. What is the significance of that award?

DR. COOPER: The National Association for Sport and Physical Education) (NASPE) sent information through the various publications that anyone in the Alliance membership who had someone who had been an inspiration to them should send in reasons for nominating a particular

person. One of my students submitted my name which a committee judged, and I received that award for being an inspiration to that person when he or she was young and just beginning professional work.

DR. VAN OTEGHEN: That's a meaningful kind of award. Is there anything that you would like to relate that I haven't given you an opportunity to talk about today?

DR. COOPER: I'd like to talk about having the right sort of start in the profession. I feel that all or at least many of us could be leaders if given the chance to display leadership qualities, and if we're encouraged to take part in the profession at the very highest level. When I was teaching high school, the superintendent of the school district asked me if I would like to go to the national AAHPER meeting in Chicago. At that time I was a high school teacher and coach who had never been to a national convention. I said I'd like to go, and the superintendent said the school system would pay my way if I wanted to go. So I went to the national Association meeting for the first time. From then on the profession and the Association had more meaning to me than before. I had simply known before only that the Association existed.

I'm suggesting that professionals select some young people and give them a chance to find out about the profession. Give them an opportunity to be leaders, and perhaps they'll surprise you. I don't know whether I would ever have gone to Association meetings if the superintendent of schools hadn't given me that opportunity.

DR. VAN OTEGHEN: I think that's very true. When I was an undergraduate at the University of Iowa, the faculty took us as students to

the national conventions. Thank you, John, for giving us the opportunity to interview you. You've been an outstanding professional leader, author and teacher. You've served as AAHPERD president and have received numerous awards. You've been a friend and mentor to hundreds of students who are serving the profession today. Thank you for all that you have shared today.

DR. COOPER:           Thank you. I enjoyed the interview.